תשובה
TESHUVA
Provocations for
Jewish Anarchism

FRONT + BACK COVER + FLAME BORDER BY MY BUB AL @APCOMFORT NOTAPCOMFORT.COM

Front: The “black fire upon white fire” of The Torah (*Resih Lakish*) erupting from a pomegranate with a circle Aleph (Aleph for Anarchy!)

Back: The author, a queer Judeo-Punk Anarchist in the style of Leonard Nimoy’s photo book *Shekhina* (2002).

Batya painting on page 20 by leora loo rozner.

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BY ANASTASIA BAT LILITH

אֲנַאסטַאסיָא בת לִילִית

For Klee Benally and Dr. Refaat Alareer, who taught me that despair is a luxury we cannot afford.

MAY THEIR MEMORIES BE REVOLUTIONS

PROVOCATIONS AGAINST SECULAR REBELLION

I am an Antizionist Jew. I am an Anarchist. These identities have become increasingly more relevant as the Genocide of the Palestinian people escalates in Gaza, the West Bank, and all of occupied Palestine, not less. There is a generational rift forming in American Jewry, and younger, more radical people are increasingly creating new, diverse spaces where we can go back to that old mode of "disagreeing for the sake of heaven". This has been true in name-only for some time: nonprofits, shuls and other institutions are captured by Zionist settler-colonial allegiance, and thus "we can disagree about anything" has always had one clear exception: Palestine.

In communicating, organizing and making new spaces with Antizionist Jews, I have felt so inspired and enervated by the creations of like-minded radicals. In ever greater numbers since the Nakba and the creation of the State of Israel, the Jewish community in America have begun to question their unwavering support for the ethnonationalist project ostensibly "in their name", which they have been largely groomed into understanding as the only key to their personal safety. I myself had a very poor, resentful relationship with my Jewish upbringing. I didn't like being Jewish, and lived as an assimilated Atheist for much of my life. In learning the horrors of settler-colonialism, unpacking Israeli mythology taught to me as Jewish history and healing my own wounds, Antizionism (albeit in a roundabout way) has helped me return to living a more Jewish life. I consciously choose to live-

a more Jewish life for many reasons: to take back lifeways and healing of spirit taken from us by colonization, to inform my radicalism, and to assert that Judaism is not Zionism.

Zionism is a colonial doppelganger, a kind of imperial dybbuk clinging to Jewish memory and trauma. I cannot exorcise it alone. Expulsion of the specter of ethnonationalism will take collective effort, but I will do my very best to engage in the Judaisms our ancestors practiced, to dig in the bones of our mythologies and potentialities to chart new paths forward. To see that Jews and Muslims once coexisted in much of the world, and the invention of "The Arab/Muslim Terrorist", among the creation of the so-called "Judeo-Chrstian tradition" was a way to destroy those old worlds [1]. In assimilating into white supremacy and western society, our ancestors were coerced and shamed into 'the featureless mass of humanity' that Whiteness offers.

I don't blame them, because doing so would bring no closure. We could speculate forever on what we would have done given XYZ, but the only closure we can find in such imaginings would be that there may never be such closure. It was not always so, but American Jews are (largely) White. We are assimilated into this Empire, but it was not always so. The American empire's taking over of the British Mandate made that all the more appealing, but the creation of Israel was not making amends for The Shoah. Rather, it was answering "The Jewish Question" in its own particular way, conscripting our ancestors as foot soldiers in an Imperial Colony built on the ruins of Palestine. We need new potential histories and re-examinations of the mythologies of Zionism that have been accepted into Jewish identity without sufficient scrutiny.

It has been revolutionary to know, deep in my spirit, just how many Jewish people opposed Zionism on a thousand different grounds: moral, ethical, legal, religious and secular. The list of Antizionist Jewish ancestors is vaster than we can imagine, even if the tangible list of names is small right now. In this way, I think, Antizionism has the potentiality to create a world in which a thousand worlds can fit. The trick is organizing ourselves into counter-institutions, and asserting our right to be Jewish separately and in opposition to Zionist Judaism:

> *"And it starts with events and minyans and zines, then decades from now we're going to have rabbinic programs and synagogues and theaters and summer camps - because we've seen it! It's happened before. It will happen again."*
>
> **Micah Bazant,** author of the zine **Timtum** [2].

Societal transformation will require personal transformation on a scale that can only be described as Revolution. The key is that we cannot wait to have it happen, we must make it happen. We should revel in our strangeness, loudly and proudly. The widening generational divide on Israel is proof of all this, and it will not close. **In the name of Life and The Blessed Holy One we must fracture it until it can never be put back together again**. Houria Bouteldja, an Algerian Muslim woman, wrote of this potentiality:

> *"Whether you like it or not, Antizionism will be, along with the indictment of the nation state, the primary site of this endgame. It will be the site of this historical confrontation between us, the opportunity for you to identify the real enemy. Because fundamentally, it's not with us that you must be reconciled but with white people".* [3]

I feel this in my bones.

The past five years have changed me: radicalized, healed and broken again in equal measure. For much of my life I have been an Atheist. Now I am unsure; and in that uncertainty I realize how much wisdom things like whiteness and colonization have taken from us. I can't pretend to have a universal path to spiritual revolution, but these society-wide transformations must first take place on the personal level. What happens in the higher realm also happens on Earth.

My own path of political radicalization kick-started a process not just of consciousness, but also personal transformation. Unlearning the Xtian and white supremacists ways in which Judaism has been used to uphold things like capitalist society or hetero-patriarchy was huge. Unlearning assimilation as a component of what it means to sort through decolonization was huge, too. Healing personal wounds regarding my personal rebuff of institutional religion has helped me become a more empathetic person, whose spirit is a little more resilient. For the first time I actually feel equipped to face dysregulation. It's been one of the hardest parts of my journey, yes, but one of the most rewarding. Without personal transformation - philosophical, spiritual, political, etc - working to liberate people in society becomes a shell game of power and clout.

Spirituality, religion, and G🪦d [4] are all words that cause strong reactions from radical spaces.

Even in revolutionary circles, people have the awareness to grapple with assimilation and colonization, but still treat belief or spirituality as uncivilized barbarism. For radicals of the European enlightenment tradition, religion inevitably means Christianity. The past two thousand years of history mean that Christianity portends institutions, heirarchy and

Empire. When matters of spirit and hope come up, so-called "radicals" repeat the old adage: No Masters, No Gods, no matter who the Seeker is or what their relationship is to Capitalism or The State. **Even generic "Leftists" can be part of reactionary and colonial traditions**.

And that breaks my heart.

"This is something that is challenging to the modern intersectional Left, whereby agreement on one issue is assumed to be stemming from a rooted ideology of shared struggle. Instead, these ideas emerge out of Biblical piety, not always an enlightened and coherent politic, though many of these authors find their way to real-world organizing and anarchist community along the way. This creates a lot of complications for the modern Left, which cannot (and should not) look the other way at reactionary interpersonal ideas simply because you hold a couple of shared goals. But it also means that there are different starting points, ones that feel alien to most radicals and which we have to rediscover. As the radical Left has started to see the value in reviving spiritual and ancestral traditions, this wall of non-empathic rationalism is starting to quiver, and hopefully looking at these deeply religious traditions as possible allies can help the boundaries break apart."

Shane Burley *Jewish Anarchism, A Review of No Masters but G🔥d by Hayyim Rothman*

And those reactionary interpersonal ideas (patriarchy, homophobia, transphobia, etc) cannot be ignored even as we ponder what consideration of The Sacred can do for revolutionaries. For women in revolutionary spaces, like **Emma Goldman**, liberation in radical movements meant liberation from Judaism, not its renewal [5]. Patriarchy and gender-tyranny is real; and yet The Sacred is associated with reaction because it has been left behind in the so-called "Enlightenment" and "de-Enchantment" of the world, and surrendered to the reactionaries. I propose a reclamation of spirit not to reinforce the burden of tradition, but to give our past "a vote, not a veto" (to quote Mordecai Kaplan), while

remaining hyper vigilant for hatred masquerading as wisdom.

We live in an epoch in which tyrants rule us with sad passions: the ascension of Neoliberalism and Globalism, extreme repression to social movements like Land Defenders or Black Lives Matter, or mass-disabling events like the COVID-19 pandemic, the list goes on. These shocks have been taken advantage of by Capital owners and States to demobilize popular movements, to pacify and criminalize dissent, and this will only get worse as The Second Constitutional Republic of the so-called United States falls to looting by the people behind the wheels of power [6].

Things are, in a word: bleak. All tools of language and spirit will be necessary to fight against the despair we are pacified with. In embracing a more Jewish life, and hearing the wisdom of our Muslim siblings, or Indigenous and Witchcraft practitioners, etc, I think the 21st century would do well to see the emergence of an An Anarchy of Spirit, in defiance of everything that Colonialism took (and still takes) from us. No Masters but G💔d, updating our understanding(s) of the different wants and spiritual needs of our comrades in the struggle for a better world:

FROM EACH ACCORDING TO THEIR ABILITIES AND DESIRES, TO EACH ACCORDING TO THEIR NEEDS AND DESIRES.

TORAH OF CINDY BARUKH MILSTEIN

As Kropotkin's theory of mutual aid posits that cooperation was the next stage in human evolution, revolutionary consciousness and imagination will be further advancements in the progress of human evolution. People cannot evolve their moral compasses and act on those revolutionary feelings without having their needs met, and yet: a worker needs not only bread but roses, too.

If we imagine G⚖️d not as The Judge or "The Father" but as The Ever-Evolving One, we can reframe mythologies tooled towards Capitalism to instead see the evolutionary process "*not as the struggle of creature against creature...but as the emergence of a single life energy, a single cosmic Mind... learning to know Itself*," [7]. When I say G🌿d, I mean life force, the prime cause of all causes, Spinoza's G🌀d. This theology can enable us to see clearly **that Anarchism is itself a spiritual practice as much as it is a praxis**. Anarchists venerate their ancestors, they engage in rituals like The Black Bloc and remembering the deeds of ancestors past in our songs and agitprop, **we should engage with these features consciously**. In this theological approach to Anarchism, we have the capacity to do what **Rav Yehuda Ashlag** (a Polish Rabbi, Kabbalist and Anarcho-Communist) said of turning personal transformation into societal transformation and "*take religion from the possessors and turn it into an instrument in the hands of the workers*" [8]. This is my attempt at a Jewish and Anarchist understanding of defending The Sacred: by placing it in conversation with political agency and revolutionary consciousness.

We have to unlearn systems of domination and work through the marks of generational conflict inscribed onto

our bodies, and close the gap between our Yetzer Hara (evil inclination, or Egos) and our Altruistic Selves. In bridging the contraction between Ego and our desires to build a better world, in that empty void there are means of cleaving closer to G🔥d. In transforming on the personal level, we are one step closer to transformation on the scale of society: lives where we can truly live our ethics, and not have to leave aside our morals just to survive.

For Rabbis like Rav Ashlag *communism* was the means by which to apply devekut (closeness to G🛠️d) to the whole of society, exemplified by that class of communists who would "*lay down their lives for the downtrodden worker, and build something better in the shell of the old*". He was ultimately disillusioned with the Soviets and became a loud critic of State Communism, developing a powerful understanding of societal change aided by bringing religious and mystical ideas in conversation with political theory. This dialogue is not something new, but instead "*reviving a sincere and traditional read on Judaism*" [9].

We can all do this. Our ancestors left many sparks of wisdom behind, and with them we can light a great fire of revolution. Without the Sacred there can be no revolution, no Olam ha-Ba.

Life is sacred. We are Jewish and we are against Genocide. To you who reads this and thinks I'm stuck in superstition or reactionism: **what part of sacred don't you understand?**

PROVOCATIONS AGAINST THE STATE

A King who tells the sea: 'until here and no further!'
He shall rule as King!
A king who comes from a putrid drop
and ends up in the grave,
why should he rule as king?

(Eleazar Kallir)

And so it breaks my heart to see Jewish radicals fighting against Capitalism, Fascism and Zionism, but have been heedless against the domination of The State. In protesting and organizing against the American funding and support of genocide, radicals have left themselves blind to critiques of The State and its links to global Capitalism.

In learning and confronting our communities links to Genocide overseas, we are confronted with the problem of "What is the right thing to do?". It is righteous for us to mobilize with Palestinians and Arabs in diaspora and to struggle alongside them. And yet, in this era where Neoliberalism gives way to Fascism (and seems very likely giving way to Techno Feudalism), we seemingly cannot act politically in ways that are not already proscribed by Liberalism and Authoritarianism.

We join protest movements organizing marches and non-violent demonstrations, which really end up as non-confrontational demonstrations. I cannot help but see protest movements and culture stuck in the era of the 1960s, where marches and demonstrations were augmented by

radical programs of mutual aid and armed confrontation, repeating the most visible and flashy aspects of rebellion like Cargo Cult logic, but with no radical teeth to back it all up!

It has been neglected that the marches of the 60s were not the only means to get the goods. The State feared them because they were augmented with militant resistance, which in turn was smashed by State repression like The Kent State massacre or the killing-off of The Black Panther Party. The State cannot be trusted because it will always demonize and dehumanize dissent. The dehumanization of dissent associated with McCarthy is in even greater effect against the Student Intifada and their encampments. What do we meet this repression with? All we can bring to bear are more rallies, more marches, more protests that lead to nowhere for student protestors and nowhere for everyone in Occupied Palestine.

What even is a "Free Palestine"? For many it's a Palestinian state, or a bi-national Israeli-Palestinian State. Where is the freedom in that? People at least seem to be waking up to the idea that the so-called "Two State Solution" is a mirage, but even exciting projects like the One Democratic State Initiative (ODSI) are still just that: states. *As an Antizionist Jew*, I support the Palestinian people and want to be an accomplice in their liberation. *As an Anarchist*, I will oppose a Palestinian State from day one of its inception. Why? Because I know what Zionism and the pursuit of Statecraft did to my people, how Nationalism is reactionary, and I want that for no one else. They deserve to live in peace, and they deserve better. This is not idealism, but a necessary dreaming of new futures when States are unwilling to give the slightest inch towards liberation, much less repentance.

Why have we (Antizionist Jews, people in solidarity with Palestine) settled for goals as intangible and minimal as a ceasefire? A clear political goal, to be sure, but one only grantable by a State. The so-called "Ceasefire" was granted after 15 months of marches and rallies, in tandem with fierce and steadfast Palestinian resistance. It lasted in name for two months (except people were dying in the dozens in Gaza, and anti-Palestinian pogroms escalated in The West Bank), and then was taken away. We have to imagine Palestine solidarity differently and we have to keep fighting smarter, if the arc of history will really be bent.

How do we do that?

Imperialism and The Shoah have created vast gulfs of distance between us and our Jewish ancestors. We are occupied in our minds and self-image by Zionist mythology of "the New Jew" and militaristic, settler strength being the solution to the weakness of so-called "Shtetl Jews".
So strong is this discourse that when we learn of the real and revolutionary armed resistance carried out by our ancestors, like the Jewish Partisans or The Jewish Labor Bund, we are caught up in that revolutionary possibility and pick up their fights without taking stock of how different the world is today. In trying to define ourselves as either Antizionist or Non-zionist Jews, even in our radical histories we cannot help but define ourselves by the metrics of Zionism.

What are the concrete politics of **The Bund**, taken up by new orgs naming themselves in honor of the historical Bund? By holding up groups like The Bund of the Soviet-Jewish Partisans, we are focusing on militaristic and State actors who opposed Zionism within the discourse of State politics, and

we leave fallow all the other histories of Jewish resistance that still need to be uncovered: Jewish resistance to Zionism in the Maghreb, in the Levant and wider MENA region, or Yiddish Anarchist movements that existed here upon Turtle Island, to name a few. It's not about competing for which story of resistance is better or appropriate, it's about living in a world of varied resistance.

We cannot only tell one story.

Conflation of Judaism with Zionism is at an all-time high. This leads to real increases in Antisemitism, which are inflated even higher with the conflation of all encampments and pro-Palestine organizing with antisemitism [10]. **This is dangerous beyond measure**. Our so-called "Jewish institutions", like the ADL, using Jewish safety as a cudgel against progressive movements makes us all unsafe, and is itself antisemitic. I was raised in **Dor Hadash**, one of the three synagogues that used the **Tree of Life** building here in **so-called Pittsburgh**.

A homegrown Neo-Nazi was the man to shoot up my synagogue and kill 11 people on October 27th, 2018. There was no "importation" of antisemitism, he was American as apple pie and internment camps. He was not an exception, but merely a Fascist foolish enough to answer the call-to-arms repeatedly sent out by Donald Trump and other figures of the far right. Institutions knowingly play with fire when they use accusations of antisemitism to further their consolidation of power, or to dehumanize dissent of anyone advocating for a Free Palestine, when we all know damn well that Antisemitism kills. I could easily argue that these projects - *Project Esther, Canary Mission and Betar collaborating with I.C.E. to deport doctoral students, etc* [11] - **will bring another mass shooter to another synagogue in these so-called United States**.

Using antisemitism as a wedge or tool to consolidate institutional power is profane, so it's only a matter of time. Once-fringe antisemitism like "the great replacement theory" has been in the zeitgeist for years now, and surprises no one. It's easy to feel the emotions of living and organizing in these conditions, and to feel the advancing darkness that threatens to swallow all of us. And yet, that darkness is here, now, and has been for quite some time.

I shouldn't have to postulate a potential future mass shooting to motivate you, when a genocide has been transpiring for 18 months. Something horrible has been transpiring to us now: genocide is being waged, and we're expected to carry on with our lives, go to work, be productive, all while the death machine keeps churning and we can tune in whenever we like. We are sustaining en masse what Dr. Gabor Maté calls a "moral injury", the ability to see injustice but being unable to change it as a wound in the body and soul [12]. It's a testament to the hearts of revolutionaries that we are all so burnt out and heartbroken, that our eyes are open to reality: and burnout leaves our bodies incapable of resisting all the same, when the death machine continues unabated (but not unchallenged, either).

I don't mean to equate my turmoil with the horrific material suffering of Palestinians, to be clear, but rather to point out that our Nefesh (our body/spirit(s)) are tarnished here, now, without having to wait for the Imperial Boomerang of the Empire's actions.

And believe me, the boomerang will swing back.

My own relation to tragedy, or the tragic loss of life on October 7th, can "only ever be a detail" (*to borrow Houria Bouteldja's phrasing*) **when 2000+ Trees of Life have been felled in Gaza, and we cannot mourn or even name the tragedy for what it is.** Our prayers are hollow when one kind of life holds more value than another.

Fascism is here, wrapped in the so-called American flag, and what we are doing now about it will be remembered for generations.

People are widely beginning to question if Israel is "real" or "legitimate" or not. This framing is also a natural response to the constant calls of "Israel's right to exist" as genocide carries on unabated. People are so, so close to seeing that if one State is "not real" (whatever that means), that all States are illegitimate. **No State has a right to exist**. Their existence is predicated upon exploitation and mounds of corpses, then justified posthumously. There were once verdant worlds of Jewish opposition to Statehood, now being studied in greater detail in recent scholarship. Delving into these histories has radicalized me, not only because of my personal connection to Judaism, but because they point out what **David Graeber** (z''l) called the ultimate hidden truth of the world: "*the world is something we make together, and we could just as easily make it differently*".

How do we co-create that world, together?

In finding my way back to Judaism, and finding ancestral connection to long-suppressed histories of Jewish Anarchists, I think Anarchist ethics are something sorely missing from current Antizionist Jewish movements across Turtle Island. This is how we can more fully actualize being Jews for Liberation, for being in radical solidarity, and accomplishing

goals that nonprofits and institutions not only cannot fix, but ultimately benefit from placing in new quagmires.

As **Klee Benally** put it, we must be "accomplices, not allies.". **The Nonprofit and Ally Industrial Complexes** only serve to demobilize and co-opt radical organizing; **JVP** are seemingly stuck in this liberal protest model of non-confrontational protests, expecting visibility to be the goal unto itself instead of a tool for further change. **Rabbis for Ceasefire** advocate so passionately for an end to the so-called "war", but are we limiting our imagination for what comes after the genocide, when so much reconciliation and repentance is on our collective horizon?

Organizations full of red flags [13, *pun intended*] like the so-called "Party for Socialism and Liberation" siphon revolutionary potential away from the people and into Authoritarian movements, which are dangerous, vindictive and reactionary. I hear often that "diversity of tactics" is necessary in organizing broad coalitions, and we have to meet people where they are. **Yet there can be no "diversity of tactics" if Liberal Orgs cannot tolerate radically autonomous movements they cannot control**. In terms of Palestine solidarity work in America now, too many of these Authoritarian and Liberal Orgs are the ones "doing the work". Which really means showing up in numbers to co-opt radical movements for their own clout or influence. **What do we do?** Anarchist Jews join these movements because they're what's in the landscape, but are they existing in these movements AS Anarchists, and bringing all that entails?

DECOLONIZING JUDAISM IS THE ANSWER, AND ANARCHISM WILL HELP US DO IT.

Decolonizing not because the material conditions of Jewish Americans are 1:1 with other colonized peoples, but that assimilation is also a form of colonization. Zionism came out of European imperial politics and was itself swimming in the hotly Antisemitic currents of that time. The answer to "The Jewish Question" was not the liberation of Jews, but their disappearance into the anonymous masses of White Europeans (and Xtians). "*The Antisemitic countries will be our allies*" [14], said Theodore Herzl, as the Zionist political movement made deals with the figurative Devil to assimilate (sic. eradicate one's identity, culture and heritage) Jewish Europeans into settler colonialism, turning them into foot soldiers for colonizing Palestine.

We cannot change the past. We are the sum of all our choices and regrets. To make amends we must name the horrors and work to repair the damage they've caused, but these steps are impossible without first engaging in personal transformation. What would it look like if we did?

What if we acted like we're already free from Zionism?

This is Anarchism as a real political philosophy and ethical framework, not merely in name. Many political perspectives temper the question "What is right?" in favor of "What is realistic?". They accept the discourse and status quo, seeking to understand what is possible within that predetermined landscape, thereby accepting what our masters have proscribed to us. Cindy Milstein identifies this short term seeking - pragmatism over idealism - as subscribing to a politics of expediency, defining our resistance in terms of a distant future. "*Tragically, as history has shown, the end never comes*" [15]. There's pragmatism, and there is waiting for a revolution that is never going to

arrive on its own. **Revolutionary literature is also apocalyptic literature.** Our collective anarchic faith must turn from a faith in certainty to a faith in possibility. There is no one coming to save us, only we can do it, together.

WE MUST MERIT MOSHIACH, AFTER ALL.

"Batya" by leora loo rozner [pg.29]

TESHUVAH, OR, JUDEO-PUNK ANARCHISM

"While we can't undo the past, we can address the present with integrity and endeavor to create a future that is much more whole than anything we can imagine from here. So let us begin." **Danya Ruttenberg**, *On Repentance And Repair: Making Amends in an Unapologetic World*

Teshuvah is typically translated as repentance. It can mean seeking forgiveness for transgressions. Teshuvah is part of the Three T's of Judaism: Tefilla (prayer), Tzedaka (justice/charity) and Teshuvah (repentance). It can also imply living a more righteous path, which typically involves the trappings of Ashkenazi Chasidic lifeways that are considered archetypal in the Western consciousness of "what real/traditional Jews look like". The term **Ba'al Teshuva** (literally Lord of Repentance/Return) is associated with movements of secular Jews moving to these more Orthodox lifeways. This typically involves secular, American Jews who go and have a spiritual experience at The Western Wall in Jerusalem.

In these assimilated expressions of Judaism, the word can ring with an air of being "born again", but Jewishly.

It need not be so.

Teshuvah also means returning anew to the same place. **Makom** (מקום) - *place* in Hebrew - is also a Rabbinic name for G🏛d. Earlier I asked us to consider G💉d as the source of Life, the cause of all causes, but what if it also meant returning to our place in collective liberation? In practicing teshuvah, what if our journey was to find our own cosmic temples of rebellion [16]?

The Rambam (the medieval philosopher Maimonedes [17]) writes of how teshuvah is only complete when we return to the same situation in which something went awry and choose to behave or act differently. When we make mistakes, the point is to return to the good within ourselves, transforming in our bodies and relationships. Forgiveness is not the end goal, it is a process of transformation with the goal of righteous action. How can we say sorry - and truly mean it - without first doing the work of growth? The same can be said of political radicalization. How can we say we fight against systems of domination and control without first doing the work of growth, in our imaginations and in our relationships with our community?

"If we ask a perpetrator to engage too early with their victim—before they've confronted the seriousness of their actions and their impact, before they've begun working to change—the likelihood of their causing additional harm, rather than meaningful repair, is much higher." (Ruttenberg).

What henceforth I call Teshuvah is my understanding of Jewish Anarchism, "returning to the place" as a revolutionary embodied practice. It's returning to Jewish texts, ritual and culture, in order to augment our skills in the fight against Capitalism and The State - all States, not just Israel. It's about pursuing learning and personal transformation, as a political act of becoming not merely an ally but an accomplice in liberation struggles near and far. Reactionaries use the word RETVRN as traveling to a mythic past that never existed. Teshuvah is about returning to the life giving ways of our ancestors, and making them our own again in times of genocide and overwhelming despair. It's not enough to look to the past and try again, we should be inspired by the past as we imagine new possibilities and confrontations. We can-

-not allow the past to hold a veto on our struggle, but it *should* have a vote. Our Jewish ancestors have been practicing self-determination for thousands of years, and we desperately need to remember that.

Embracing new Jewish life as a praxis of 'being a problem' to the status quo: being a problem to Jewish communities that are also Zionist, to the Christian Zionists who outnumber us in the so-called "United States", and being a problem to the Fascists at the helm of Empire. Learning Jewish languages, studying the texts and traditions that were replaced by ethnonationalism and loyalty to Israel, practicing rituals alongside direct action, these are just a few ways we can embrace Teshuvah. We are held accountable for the harm that was done before our time—for all the injurious deeds that we have held on to, and for all that we have not actively worked to undo. In the words of **Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel**, "*...that in a free society, some are guilty, but all are responsible*" [18]. Our problemhood is not just a lofty goal of reclaiming our ancestral lifeways from Zionism, but in motivating us to be responsible for the state of the world, guiding us to build something new in the shell of the old.

What if in embracing our problemhood and becoming illegible to the mainstream establishment, we found out we were never quite alone in the first place?

By transforming ourselves, we become that much better equipped to repair transgressions that predate us, or those that are actively being waged "in our name". Returning to the depths of our collective pasts purposefully erased by colonialism is how we enliven Judaisms to help us embrace and perform radical political practice.

And I say Judaisms because **there has never been one Judaism**. Jews in diaspora have always assimilated to differing degrees with the culture around them, and the widespread diversity of exile has been a strength of a people facing persecution for millennia. All tradition begins as ritual innovation. It is only with the colonial creation of the Israeli State and the so-called "negation of the diaspora" that so much Jewish diversity was extinguished. Iraqi synagogues were bombed by the Zionist Underground, working to hasten exodus out of Iraq [19]. Beta Israel from Ethiopia are tokenized as examples of Israeli multiculturalism, while being given birth control to manage their birthrates [20]. Some of the Jews of Algeria were put on trial for "high treason" for trying to stay in Algiers rather than make Aliyah [21].

> *"Zionism was not a movement of self-determination but an attempt to change Yiddishkeyt from a diverse ethno-religion to a nationality: decentering Torah and flattening Jewish culture to a manufactured Israeli culture, with a single land and language. Zionism holds our traditions in contempt. We must abandon our languages, our values, our interpretations of text in favor of Zionism. We must become the "new Jew", a colonizer, an army, a state. All the violences of kings and nations visited upon us can be avoided if it is us who do the statecraft this time."*
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> **Misha Holleb** "Ki Siso, Purim, & the Avodo Zoro of Zionism" [22]

Zionism began as an explicitly secular and colonial project. Only after The Shoah and the proliferation of so-called "Religious Zionism" did there emerge talk of The Jewish People's "exclusive rights" to indigeneity in The Holy Land, whitewashed with progressive language like "Land Back" and "Reparations" [23]. So much ink is spilled on the necessity of Israel's existence and its links to Jewish safety, but the core psychological truth is evident just by listening to The Hasbara. In the wake of The Shoah, the nation building project filled a

hole in many people's hearts that was left by the G🌰d that never intervened against Genocide. And now, with the embodied practices and texts of Judaism replaced with Zionist rhetoric, spirit and pride, Israel and the occupied land itself has become an Idol. The Israeli State is **Avodo Zoro**, the sin of the golden calf. Hashem and Judaism is denied for the worship of national and ethnic pride, loyalty to the fascist State rather than our own sense of ethics.

Doesn't that make you wanna go ape shit? It makes me mad as hell! **Kadosh kadosh kadosh**, **even outrage can be holy.** Where is the dignified rage of the Jewish community? When will our despair turn to sanctified anger? Jewish institutions co-opt any resistance to the U.S. imperial war machine using our sacred symbols, our myths and stories, and it shouldn't only make you feel despair, it should make you feel fucking angry! Children are being killed every day, the Palestinian people are being killed every day. Israeli hands put up the apartheid walls, and Jewish hands will be necessary to bring them down.

Use the word Anarchism or don't, but think and act for your G🏴d damn selves. Pray for yourselves. Rebel against the desecration of the Sacred when you davven. Take my words and run with them, practice Teshuvah, find what it means to you and form your own Minyan. I can see the problem of the current Antizionist movement is one of agency. I say that we embrace our Jewishness not to appeal to some sense of liberal identity politics, but because ritual practice is radical, and we can use our ancestral tools to build a better tomorrow. This is what revolutionary Teshuvah means to me: unbinding ourselves from the Zionist doppelganger, and finding safety in solidarity with other peoples in local struggle. My experience with Judaism is not everyone's, but

living a more Jewish life and being trans have been extraordinarily similar journeys. As **Joy Ladin** describes it: a "*coming home to myself, learning from elders, and an identity that feels wildly different depending on context*". [24].

What if we learned Jewish languages in defiance of Modern Hebrew, like Yiddish, Ladino, Judeo-Arabic, etc? What if we got together and cobbled services together, proudly and loudly serving Anarcho-drash on the nature of our sacred texts in tumultuous times? What if we welcomed anyone and everyone while remaining firm in our convictions that we are Jews Against Zionism, and Against the State? What new lifeways and cultural resilience can come out of willingly sharing ourselves with all who will listen, and from centering acts of care in the marathon of political struggle? What new connections can we make in using our spirit to motivate us to act in this life, to bring about a better world to come? **Friendship itself can be a form of life; let us live together in the process of becoming, for ourselves and for our comrades in need of accomplices to liberation**.

I am returning to Judaism out of love and a radical responsibility to act against injustice. We're not the chosen people, but fucking hell do I feel called to be responsible. **Fuck a Baal-Teshuvah, call me Judeo-Punk**. Call me *cherem*, call me heretic, I will be davening in my trans tzitzit and my denim vest, and as long as I'm in a minyan of comrades no one can stop me. Return to the good within us, sanctify enough of our dignified rage to fight against Fascism, form Antizionist counter-institutions of care, and then return to the place once more.

אִילָן הַשִּׁיחוֹר
TREE OF LIBERATION
SOLIDARITY
RITUAL PRAXIS
EMBODIED PRACTICES
ETHICAL COMPASS
PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION
DECOLONIZATION
DIGNIFIED RAGE
מקום הפֶּשַׁע
THE COSMIC TEMPLE OF REBELLION
LIBERATION FROM
TRANSFORMATION
SHE IS ONE

[pg.29]

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Page 20. *Batya* by **leora loo rozner**. Inspired by the oft-ignored femmes of our tradition, this painting depicts Batya ascending from bathing by the riverbank in Mitzrayim (Egypt).
She was inspired to bathe in the waters and cleanse herself of idol worship, taking on a new name, Batyah, identifying herself with Adonai and finding baby Moses. She holds a snake: in Hebrew, nachash/serpent (**נָחָשׁ**) is numerically equivalent to moshiach (**מָשִׁיחַ**). loo interprets moshiach not as a savior but as personal rectification and change, its meaning multifaceted. For Batya her decision to humanize baby Moses in the face of repression from the Royal Court leads to transformation, like the *nun* נ of nachash becoming horizontally aligned in a *nun sofit* ן. Represented by the snake bound around Batya's arm, she extends in the shape of the rectified letter, the snake both the husks of a previous idolatrous life and the possibility of new growth. We have two snake motifs: that of *gan eden*, and the head of Moses' staff that heals the exiled in the desert. Every image harkens at multiple meanings, it is both transformation and the collective liberation that is afterwards made possible. Each soul, through rejection of the status quo, can undergo its own personal moshiach to a state of knowledge-of and deep reverence for all life (i.e. nachash).
What is it we can do, in our time, to merit those changes?

Page 27. *The Tree of Liberation* by **Anastasia bat Lilith**. Inspired by a diagram from "*Word and Image in Medieval Kabbalah*" (2012) by Marla Segol, in which a 'tree of wisdom' depicts creation in The Sefer Yetzirah. The Tree of Liberation (*Ilan HaShichrur*) is watered by personal transformation, which finds itself formed in The Place of Rebellion (*Makom HaPesha*). Evoking phrasing like The World to Come (*Olam HaBa*), my Jewish Anarchist practice is one of finding G-d as the place we return to within ourselves in the face of overwhelming despair against Empire. **The temple in space is long-gone: our temple shall be rebellion.**

ANARCHIST TOSEFTA
OR, FURTHER READING

ARTICLES

- **The Ruins Should be Inhabited as Part of a Process of Repair** by Ariella Aïsha Azoulay
  - https://hyperallergic.com/861590/the-ruins-should-be-inhabited-as-part-of-a-process-of-repair/
- **A Reconstructionist Reckoning** by Shane Burley
  - https://jewishcurrents.org/a-reconstructionist-reckoning
- **An Afro-Jewish Critique of Jews Against Liberation** by Lewis R. Gordon
  - https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/theorizing-modernities/afro-jewish-critique-liberation/
- **Turning Death Itself into Life** Binya Kóatz
  - https://svara.org/death-itself/

PODCASTS

- **History is Not Innocent with Ariella Aïsha Azoulay** Making Menches
- **Episode 14 - An Anarchism of Despair w/ Cindy Barukh Milstein at Another Carolina Anarchist Bookfair** on The Breakup Theory
- **How ANARCHIST CALISTHENICS Changed My Life (and how it can change yours too)** The Dugout | a black anarchist podcast

ZINES

- **Many Gods No Masters: Reflections on the Intersection of Anarchism and Spirituality** by Many
- **The Opposite of Haram: A Queer Muslim Manifesto** by Sheyam Ghieth
- **Accomplices Not Allies**: Abolishing the Ally-Industrial Complex by Indigenous Action
- [FORTHCOMING] **Ritual as Resistance: Defending the Sacred** by Many and curated by Cindy Barukh Milstein

BOOKS

- **Safety Through Solidarity** by Shane Burley & Ben Lorber
- **No Spiritual Surrender: Indigenous Anarchy in Defense of The Sacred** by Klee Benally
- **Islam and Anarchism: Relationships and Resonances**. Mohamed Abdou
- **To the Ghosts Who Are Still Living** by Ami Weintraub

שוב למקום

OUR TEMPLE SHALL BE REBELLION

TESHUVA

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